

TWO UNFOUGHT BATTLES

A True Secret Service Story of the War

THOMAS M. JOHNSON

"Is it true, general, that a staff-officer lost a copy of the attack order?"

"Nothing so crude," the general chuckled. "He wrote to General Pershing describing preparations for the attack, and saying everything was ready for General Pershing to set the date. He used a fresh sheet of carbon-paper, then dropped it into the waste-basket. For five minutes he left his room. When he came back, the carbon-paper was gone—as he had hoped it would be. The German spies were on the job."

They surely were—on the job and completely fooled—and thanks to them, so were the German General Staff and its two presiding geniuses, Paul von Hindenburg and Erich von Ludendorff.

Thus it happened that during the crucial last months of the war, when the German Army needed every soldier and every gun to stave off defeat, its commanders were haunted by the specter of great American attacks, first in Alsace, then in Lorraine. They moved thousands of troops and many guns from points where they really were desperately needed, to reinforce other points that the Americans made them believe were threatened. The same fear influenced Ludendorff to advise the

German government to seek an armistice. Yet these particular great American attacks never came off.

It was never intended that they should, for they were a colossal practical joke, a Yankee bluff that worked.

Making it work was one of the cleverest "under-cover" jobs of the war. The full facts have been buried in the innermost recesses of the Intelligence Section of the Army General Staff, and until now this true American secret service story has never been fully told. Even now, inquiries bring a chorus of "Don't quote me," so that the story had to be ushered in by an anonymous "general."

To begin with, only five men knew all about it, and all of them were generals. There were Pershing and Pétain, American and French commanders-in-chief; McAndrew, then chief of staff of the A.E.F., now dead; Fox Conner, then chief of operations of the A.E.F., now deputy chief of staff of the army; and Hugh A. Drum, then chief of staff of the First Army. Later a few others were let into the secret and participated in its execution, but never many. Among them were Colonel Willey Howell and Captain Sanford Griffith of the First Army Intelli-

gence Section, and Colonel A. L. Conger, during the war a key man in the Intelligence Section at G.H.Q., and now American Military Attaché in Germany.

For more than a month, at the very time when the Allies were preparing and beginning to deliver the blows that ended the war, the Germans were kept guessing, and they usually guessed wrong, where and when the great new American Army, totaling more than a million strapping young doughboys, was going to strike. Right up to the armistice, they were not sure what was coming next. The deception was so complete that even American officers who were to lead in these "battles" were in the dark—as they had to be to insure success.

In August, 1918, almost everybody in France was talking about the big American attack on the St.-Mihiel salient that was then in preparation. German spies, less a joke in France than here, were busily reporting the talk, and Hindenburg and Ludendorff were getting ready. General Pershing and General Pétain agreed that something must be done to draw a herring across the trail and make the Germans believe that after all they would not be attacked at St.-Mihiel.

Soon afterward, about August 25, Captain de Viel Castel, French liaison officer at American Press Headquarters, returned to Meaux from French Grand Quartier and told a group of American newspaper correspondents, quite confidentially, a military secret. The American First Army, which was then being organized for its initial independent blow, might attain brilliant results,

he said, by an offensive in Alsace, 125 miles southeast of St.-Mihiel. The Americans might push through and capture Mulhouse, on what was then German soil, only ten miles from the Rhine! Not only would the moral effect be great, but the wrecking of the Rhine bridges by shell-fire would seriously cripple German communications.

"Of course," he cautioned, "I do not say that the Americans *will* do that, but it is an interesting possibility, and I am sure that Captain Morgan would pass carefully worded despatches."

And Captain Morgan did pass, for such as wrote them, despatches to American newspapers, expatiating on the great military and political results that would come from a successful American offensive in Alsace. Let us hope the German Intelligence Section read those despatches.

The despatches indicated as the place of attack a natural breach in the mountain wall between France and Germany, a broad pass called the Gap of Belfort. On the French side of the Gap was the historic fortress city of Belfort; on the German side, Mulhouse, then, Teutonically, Mülhausen. From the dome-like summit of the Ballon d'Alsace, a near-by height, one can look through the Gap and see the Rhine, dimly beyond.

The Belfort Gap was the point on the entire Western Front nearest to that river of story and strategy, and it was also the only point from Metz to Switzerland where an Allied army could advance over level ground. Prospect of an attack there would give the Germans a real scare, would

be a most unwelcome war baby for the famous Alsatian storks to lay upon their door-step, but up to August 27, 1918, they had had no reason to expect anything of the kind.

That night, Major-General Omar Bundy, commanding the Sixth American Army Corps, sat at dinner with his staff in Bourbonne-les-Bains, in the American training area, about seventy-five miles northwest of the Gap of Belfort. General Bundy was in charge of training several divisions recently arrived in France. It was understood that some of them might participate in the American attack at St.-Mihiel then scheduled for September 10 or thereabouts.

Then came a rap on the door, and in walked Captain Howe, bearing important confidential despatches from G.H.Q., and, with them, mystery and drama.

So important were the despatches that General Bundy and Brigadier-General Briant H. Wells, his chief of staff, left the room to read them. They found that General Conner, acting for General Pershing, directed General Bundy to take his staff at once to Belfort where, at the Grand Hôtel et du Tonneau d'Or (the Golden Cask, fit name for a mysterious rendezvous), he would receive from Colonel Conger the special instructions of General Pershing. The orders commanded absolute secrecy, and were so worded that General Bundy and General Wells could think but one thing: they were being sent on a mission of greatest moment. They returned to the dining-room, where the corps staff grew silent as they saw their generals' grave faces.

"I wish to see Colonel Baltzell,

Colonel Mackall, and Colonel Barden—at once," said General Bundy.

These three officers he directed to be ready to start next morning for an unknown destination where they would stay an indeterminate period of time, and not a word to a soul about it. When they set forth in the morning, the three colonels, General Bundy and General Wells, Captain Verney E. Pritchard, and a French liaison officer, they left Colonel Charles H. Bridges in charge, to continue the training of the several divisions in that area.

"But where are you going?" asked Colonel Bridges.

"We can't tell you," said General Wells, and the cars drove away.

At the Tonneau d'Or in Belfort they found Colonel Conger, imperturbable, almost professorial in manner, but with keen eyes behind the mask. He at once impressed upon General Bundy the need for secrecy, and then told him there had been so much loose talk about the St.-Mihiel offensive that the news had leaked into Germany, and General Pershing had decided to call off that attack. The actual attack would be made about the same date, September 10, but through the Gap of Belfort, with the Rhine as objective. General Bundy and his staff were at once to occupy headquarters in the center of town that had been engaged for them by Captain Griffith and to prepare plans for the attack.

It would be a powerful blow, Colonel Conger disclosed, as befitted the first all-American attack of the war. Some two hundred and fifty thousand men, with a strong artillery, would take part. The seven front-line divisions would be the

Twenty-ninth from New Jersey, Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia; the Thirty-fifth from Kansas and Missouri; the Thirty-sixth from Texas and Oklahoma; the Seventy-eighth from western New York, New Jersey, and Delaware; the Seventy-ninth from northeastern Pennsylvania, Maryland, and the District of Columbia; the Eightieth from Virginia, West Virginia, and western Pennsylvania; and the Ninety-first from Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Nebraska, Montana, Wyoming, and Utah. Detachments from each division were now arriving in Belfort to reconnoiter the trenches they were to occupy. But the Germans must know nothing of the change in plan; all must be done most secretly.

That would be difficult in Belfort. The Alsace front had been quiet so long that this influx of American generals and other officers almost made Belfort's famous rock-hewn lion sit up and take notice. Those who indeed did sit up were the German agents who had found this city with its many blond, German-speaking Alsatians a happy hunting-ground, with plenty of cover. It was only ten miles from German soil, only a few miles farther from Switzerland, hotbed of spies and a center of the German spy system. As the news spread, much of Belfort's male population converged upon the Tonneau d'Or, to stand in the lobby and crane eager necks, every moment becoming more curious and more excited.

They saw General Bundy leave to stir up what had been the quietest sector of the Western Front, a rest-cure, where French soldiers, and German

too, were sent after exhausting service, for a well earned *repos*. There in the trenches, they smoked their pipes for hours without hearing a gun fired and looked out upon a No-Man's-Land overgrown with daisies; or else, in a forest glade a few hundred yards from the front line, sat safely at rustic tables and drank the fine foaming beer of Alsace. It was a good old war. The trenches must be held, of course, but in a spirit of live and let live. The French troops enjoyed the scenery, of which there was plenty. The deep green fir forests, the swift-rushing streams, the villages, varicolored and oddly designed, set amid the blue Alsatian mountains—they really are blue—made it a land of pure delight.

As the sector of this paradise that seemed most promising for attack lay between Altkirch and Thann, General Bundy paid a visit to Major-General Charles G. Morton, commanding the Twenty-ninth Division, one of those designated for the attack, which was already in the line. Major-General W. M. Wright, commanding the Seventh Corps to the north, was directed to submit a plan for an attack through the Belfort Gap. General Wright submitted the plan but advised against such an attempt, saying, "Too many casualties for the return we would get."

Colonel Conger called on the staffs of the Seventh and Eighth French armies, commanding in Alsace; and backed by orders from General Pétain, who was in the secret, he got them to give up their battle-maps to the Americans, who, he said, were making an *étude*. That aroused some perturbation among our French allies. *Quoi donc*, they wondered,

was this American *étude* all about. Did their sometimes too ardent allies propose to stir up this rest sector with alarums and excursions? They hoped not—most sincerely they hoped not.

But it looked so. All along the twenty-mile front selected for the attack, American reconnaissance parties were now examining trenches, dugouts, gun-positions, rest-billets, which they believed their respective divisions were soon to occupy. It was too bad, Colonel Conger told them, that this could hardly fail to cause talk by the French troops and even by the Alsatian civilians who, in this peaceful sector, were permitted to remain in their homes close to the front. Colonel Conger expressed a pious hope that the German observers would not see the unusual activity in these usually almost deserted trenches.

Meantime the Sixth Corps staff had prepared a tentative plan for the coming attack, containing many recommendations as to how the secretly forming American First Army could most readily break the German front in the Gap of Belfort and cut the Rhine bridges near Mulhouse. This plan Colonel Conger took to Chaumont, to show it to General Pershing.

Immediately on his return, on September 3, Colonel Conger sought a conference with General Bundy. General Pershing, he said, not only approved the plan but had decided to make the attack even more extensive than had been contemplated. He especially liked the recommendation that as soon as the Rhine was approached, the Alsace attack should be followed and supported by a second attack to the north, in the Vosges

Mountains, launched by French and American troops there, including the Sixth Regular Division. He wished the staff to study that problem a little more fully.

What General Pershing actually had said was something like this:

"We can't have the St.-Mihiel attack ready until September 12. We'll have to string out this Alsace affair a little longer, and this seems the best way."

When the battle of Alsace was originally discussed at First Army headquarters, between General Pershing and General Hugh A. Drum, it was agreed that as few as possible should be in the secret. So Colonel Conger set the staff to work on this new phase of the battle plan. The stern businesslike silence of this group of American officers, working day and night in their centrally located but tightly closed headquarters, heightened the tension of the crowd in the Tonneau d'Or lobby. Belfort buzzed with gossip.

Now was the time, Colonel Conger decided. Surely reports of what was going on must have reached Germany. Now was the time to furnish confirmation that Hindenburg and Ludendorff could but accept as proof that a strong American attack in Alsace was coming. He had been encouraged by the frequent appearance of several gentlemen in the hotel, even in his own corridor. He hoped they were the very gentlemen he was looking for.

Then came the crowning episode, the turning-point in the great battle of Alsace. In his room in the Tonneau d'Or, Colonel Conger sat himself

down and wrote a letter to General Pershing. He put much into that letter. He reported that all was ready for the big attack through the Belfort Gap, if General Pershing would but set the date.

Colonel Conger made a copy of the letter, using a brand-new sheet of carbon-paper. When he had finished, he held up the carbon-paper to the light. Every word to the American commander-in-chief stood out, clearly stenciled. Colonel Conger crumpled up the carbon-paper and threw it into the waste-basket. Then he left the room.

For five minutes this clever intelligence officer walked about the lobby of the Tonneau d'Or. Then, too anxious to wait longer, he returned to his room. The waste-basket was empty! It had taken no longer than that.

With the comfortable feeling of a task well done, Colonel Conger went again to Chaumont, and the door of General Pershing's office in Barrack B was closed tightly after him, perhaps to bottle up the laughter of the C-in-C. at what his Sherlock Holmes had to report.

"It's working fine," he said. "String it out just a little longer."

So back to Belfort went Colonel Conger, to assure his little group of earnest workers that General Pershing was well satisfied and that, even though they had heard with alarm that some of their seven divisions were moving directly away from Alsace, all was going "according to plan." General Pershing now wanted a special study made of the ground in the Vosges where the northern attack would be made, to support the one in Alsace.

The reconnaissance parties had finished their work, and were sent to tell their division commanders that they had made good progress in preparing for an Alsace attack, while General Bundy and General Wells went to Remiremont, in the Vosges, thirty miles northwest of Belfort, the headquarters of General Wright's Seventh Corps. There they studied roads and the supply situation in the event of an advance from that quarter. General Wells was beginning to ask himself some questions about this rather lengthy preparation for an attack by troops that marched away from the place where it was to be made, when the dénouement came.

General Pétain, commander-in-chief of the French Army, appeared suddenly in Belfort. He held, rather ostentatiously, a conference of all the corps and division commanders in the region. To the German agents who reported the conference, it doubtless looked like part of the preparation for battle. What really happened was that General Pétain thanked the assembled generals for their coöperation with the Americans in preparing the battle of Alsace, and told them, for the first time, that the battle was never to come off. It was, he explained, a ruse. General Morton was at the conference, and it did not take him long to reach General Bundy. "Have you heard that this is all a fake?" he asked.

"No," said General Bundy, "I have not, and it doesn't matter. We have obeyed our orders. If it isn't a fake, we are ready to attack as soon as our troops arrive. If it is a fake, it's a good one, and I hope it works."

It took a real soldier to forget professional dignity and say that. He

realized, of course, that not one more person than was absolutely necessary, no matter how trustworthy, could have been safely informed of the plan—that secrecy was essential.

The end justified it all. The stirring up of the silent places in the Alsace front had its result. The Intelligence Section found soon after that three German divisions, thirty-six thousand men, had been moved from near St.-Mihiel more than one hundred miles southeast to the region of Mulhouse, to help repel the expected American attack. Then on September 12 the American people and the world were electrified by the first terse United Press despatch sent by F. S. Ferguson, announcing that the real attack upon St.-Mihiel salient had commenced. It was instantly and completely successful. The German reserves there were too weak for a counter-attack. The ruse had worked.



So the same game was tried again. Immediately after its victory at St.-Mihiel, the American First Army swung into preparations for a second and greater blow at the Germans in the Meuse-Argonne region northwest of St.-Mihiel. Now if the Germans could be made to believe that five hundred thousand American troops, with guns and supplies, were moving from the St.-Mihiel region not northwest but southeast, in exactly the opposite direction from that in which they really were going, the First Army would again be able to surprise the enemy. General Pershing, General Drum, and Colonel Howell held a conference at First Army headquarters at Ligny-en-Barrois, out of which grew the battle of Lorraine.

This was a more elaborate “battle” than that of Alsace, for all were learning by experience. It was decided to create the impression that American reserves were moving, and that other preparations were afoot for a great converging attack upon the powerful German fortress of Metz, a natural sequence to the St.-Mihiel victory.

About September 15 German observers stationed on the Vosges foot-hills in the Lunéville sector, quiet as Alsace since the disturbing Rainbow Division had left, reported that Allied aviators were becoming very inquisitive about the German rear areas. Planes with the red, white, and blue marking were flying far behind the lines, evidently seeking photographs and information. This was one of the early premonitory signs of a far-reaching offensive. It was followed by another, equally well recognized. The Allied artillery aroused itself from its wonted lethargy, and began dropping shells far behind the German lines, upon points untouched for years. The artillery fire was so handled that German observers, noting every detail, could conclude only that preparations were being made for the barrage and concentration fire that precede and accompany an attack.

Then Brigadier-General S. D. Rockenback, commanding the First Army tanks, received a mysterious order to send twenty-five tanks on “a mission extremely dangerous, that must be handled with great discretion.” General Rockenback was then making every effort to assemble as many tanks as possible for the Meuse-Argonne. The A.E.F. never

had tanks enough, and for this attack had no heavy tanks at all. The tank commander could not spare twenty-five light tanks and said so, but General Pershing ordered that they be sent anyway.

So the twenty-five tanks, commanded by officers especially chosen for gallantry, reported to Major-General Joseph T. Dickman's Fourth Corps in the old St.-Mihiel salient. The young officers, fully understanding that this was a desperate job, agreed that rather than be captured they would kill themselves.

On the night of September 21-22, German listening-posts in the Hindenburg Line, across the Woëvre plain, heard the unmistakable clatter and rumble of tanks behind the American lines. Next morning, their observers spotted tank tracks leading from one patch of woods to another. There were a good many tank tracks. The next night the noise was repeated, with even more tracks the following morning. A large force of tanks seemed to be concentrating behind the American lines, and tanks are used only in attacks. The young officers succeeded so well that they brought down a terrific German bombardment.

At the same time, only a few miles away, the greatest military figure of the war stepped for a moment upon the scene and played a brief "bit" in the farce. Marshal Foch, Allied commander-in-chief, made a flying visit to Alsace and Lorraine in his special train. He and General Pershing went over the St.-Mihiel battle-field just as the tanks were assembling; and the next day found the director of all the Allied armies holding conference in the

large and rather conspicuous city of Nancy, near the front, with Generals de Castelnau and Gérard, who would command an attack in either Alsace or Lorraine.

Afterward the marshal explained that trip by saying he had been informed that Ludendorff was complimenting him by having his goings and comings closely watched, and he wanted to "give him a little change."

In the meantime, down around Lunéville, Colonel Conger had a set-back. The reconnaissance parties had worked so well in Alsace that he tried them again. Each division in reserve of the First Army sent to Lunéville a party of officers and men, who sallied forth to go through the trenches and get from the French occupants information necessary for an American relief. They were enthusiastic—too enthusiastic, when they proudly reported back to Colonel Conger that they had taken pains not to arouse the suspicions of the German observers, crouching with glasses in the tree-top observation-posts of that wooded sector.

"Good Lord!" said Colonel Conger to himself. "What have they done?" They had borrowed French uniforms and worn them all the time they were under German observation! Some other way must be found to complete the Germans' deception. The Meuse-Argonne attack was to begin September 26, now only a few days off.

But General Drum's First Army staff was not lacking in resource. So while the Germans prepared for trouble in the Lunéville sector and beyond St.-Mihiel, their wireless stations east of Verdun, seeking to

intercept Allied messages, succeeded—and got an awful jolt. Messages in English, a considerable number of them, suddenly began to fill the air. They were in code, of course, but a code the Germans could decipher, and when they did they came to this astounding conclusion: A great many American troops—they identified the wireless stations of half a dozen divisions—were moving up to the front, east of Verdun and northwest of St.-Mihiel, behind the thin screen of French troops who held the front-line trenches there. They belonged to a new American Army, the Tenth, and were exchanging messages which, though carefully worded, could only mean that a general attack might be expected.

General Drum and Colonel Parker Hitt, the radio expert of the army, were creating an American Tenth Army for the first and only time in the history of the A.E.F., from a few radio stations—a feat unique in our military annals.

The intercepted and decoded messages were considered so important that they were sent immediately to Hindenburg and Ludendorff. They knew another American blow must fall soon, somewhere. Apparently here was the priceless intelligence that told where. Orders went out to hasten preparations for defense of the front on each side of Metz, from east of Verdun to the Vosges, and to redouble vigilance in seeking information about the coming American attack. Besides this, such reserves as could be spared from other parts of the front must be massed in German Alsace and Lorraine, and east of the Meuse.

That is why, when on the morning

of September 26 the nine attacking American divisions, two hundred and forty thousand men, jumped off west of the Meuse all the way to the Argonne Forest, they found immediately facing them only five weak German divisions, sixty thousand men. They were able to advance, at some places, seven miles before the Germans could bring to the real point of danger the reserve divisions that had been awaiting elsewhere the attack that never came. This took two or three days, and meantime these American divisions, most of them inexperienced in battle, had dealt the Germans one of the hardest blows of the decisive campaign of 1918.



When the battle which began that September 26 ended on November 11 in victorious armistice, the Intelligence Section set out to find how its practical joke had looked from the other side. It came in contact with an officer of the German Intelligence who, even now, must be called only Colonel X. During the war he had the very important job of receiving and acting on information, from whatever source, that came in about Allied plans and movements. He had been on the receiving end of all the decoy misinformation, and he had duly weighed the reports of the American activities in Alsace. Then he had written to Ludendorff:

“I recognize quite fully that all these preparations made for attack may perfectly well turn out to be a *ruse de guerre* intended to mislead us as to the real point of attack. However, there is nothing to indicate that it is not the real point of attack, and our danger there is so great that I

deem it imperative to have these divisions."

Upon this advice Ludendorff sent the thirty-six thousand men to Alsace. Then indications of the coming battle of Lorraine, the converging attack upon Metz, began to pour in upon Colonel X. The wireless messages, the tank tracks, the airplane flights, the artillery fire, all were carefully studied. The German troops were still so disposed as to protect the southern front against the new danger.

Ludendorff took that danger very seriously, for the southern sector, that of Alsace and Lorraine, was of the whole Western Front the section nearest the Fatherland. A breakthrough there meant invasion. In his mind's eye, Ludendorff saw Metz overwhelmed by a shimmering flood of bayonets that poured onward toward the Rhine. The Central Powers were crumbling; already Bulgaria had collapsed. Threatened with desertion by her allies, no wonder Germany looked to the strengthening of her own defenses.

Crashing blows were dealt those defenses in late September by all the Allied armies on the Western Front, coördinated in masterly fashion by Marshal Foch. On October 2, the leaders of all parties in the German Reichstag assembled to hear a report from Ludendorff of conditions at the front. Much depended on that report, for if the German Army could not hold out there, the jig was up.

When they heard the report, they concluded that the jig certainly was up. The report was delivered by Major Baron von dem Bussche, of

General Ludendorff's staff, who had memorized and repeated almost verbatim what Ludendorff had told him to say.

"Things are bad now," was its burden. "They will get worse, not better."

He said, word for word:

"From the North Sea to Switzerland, preparations for attack are in progress. The most extensive are against Lorraine and Upper Alsace, and we are forced to distribute our reserves and to keep the whole front in a state of readiness for the attack. Considerable forces have to be stationed especially in Lorraine and Upper Alsace, for the defense of German territory."

The battles of Alsace and Lorraine had done their work. After emphasizing the danger that these "battles" represented to him, Ludendorff gave many other reasons why there was only one thing to do—seek an armistice. Germany's allies were falling away; her own armies were being rolled back slowly but inexorably. The German soldier was losing his nerve; to-day he still fought; to-morrow—who could tell? There was talk of revolution. The Reichstag leaders listened to the voice of doom. Soon after, an armistice was asked—the armistice that took effect at eleven o'clock on November 11, 1918.

So two battles that never were fought, and never were meant to be fought, helped to end the world's greatest war. It was a neat piece of work, of which General Pershing could say afterward, laughing delightedly:

"Rather think we foxed 'em."

SMILING TO THE END

FRANKLIN HOLT

GINA WAS a scrawny pale-faced little Italian girl when I met her in Genoa in 1916. I am not sure just what her age was, but I think she must have been about eight, judging from her meager little frame.

Ragged, undernourished, and rather dirty, she appeared before me one day where I sat on a bench in the park. In her thin little arms she held her baby brother, Vittorio. Together they regarded me with steady and unembarrassed curiosity. I observed that Vittorio would have been more sightly if some one had kindly but firmly blown and wiped his nose for him. Neither he nor Gina seemed to be distressed by it, however.

After I had sustained their silent examination for what Gina evidently considered a genial and propitious length of time, she volunteered the information that her father had that morning been sent to the front.

"He'll never come back again," she stated in conclusion.

"But why?" I demanded, startled by her matter-of-fact tone.

"He's sickly. Mother says he'll die of exposure up there in the mountains if the Austrians don't kill him first." She spoke with the calm resignation of one used to meeting misfortune frequently, who realized the futility of the struggle against life.

"But it may be good for him—the fresh air," I protested.

"It will kill him," Gina stated firmly, "and then mother and I will have to run the tailor-shop alone. Mother can cut almost as well as father. I sew the buttons, but now I don't have much time on account of taking Vittorio out in the park. When he dies, though, I'll be able to help more."

"Is the baby going to die?" I asked in awe.

"All mother's babies die. Vittorio is sickly like father. He's almost two now, and the last one died when he was two years and twenty-one days." She looked at Vittorio with affectionate regret, tossed him, and then set him with motherly solicitude down among the warm pebbles of the park path. Looking up at me again she announced with abrupt satisfaction, "Your pants are ripped."

"Are they?" I pretended surprise, though as a matter of fact I had known for some time that such was the case, and had learned to assume a posture while sitting which I had believed concealed my misfortune from the public eye. Nothing escaped the keen eyes of Gina, however.

"Yes, they are," she said positively. "It's a bad one too—and will get worse if you don't get them